

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Bureau Of Land Management
Colorado State Office
2850 Youngfield Street
Lakewood, Colorado 80215-7093

April 29, 1999

In Reply Refer To:
8500 (CO-931) P

Instruction Memorandum No. CO-99-022
Expires: 9/30/99

To: All Field Offices

From: State Director, Colorado

Subject: Preparation of Briefing Books for Areas in Conservationists' Wilderness Proposal

We have received a number of requests for current data on wilderness study areas and areas included in the Conservationists' Wilderness Proposal. Our Annual Work Plan guidelines also direct an updating of resource data for Wilderness Study Areas. We have also been requested by Congresswoman DeGette, and others, for a variety of current data and maps. In order to have current resource data and a usable display format to answer these questions, the attachment provides guidelines for information and the format to be developed for these areas.

We have attempted to include only information directly requested, or the most relevant data that may be useful in the ongoing wilderness debate. We believe that boiling the request down to the items covered in the attachment will limit the amount of staff time needed. In addition, in order to minimize impacts to other high priority work, we are not asking for the data until the end of the fiscal year. The Colorado State Office will develop the maps as indicated in the attachment.

We have also attached copies of the briefing summaries for each of the six roadless review areas to indicate the general level of detail required. Although the information requested here is not identical to that found in the roadless review area summaries, the kind of information and level of detail is similar.

If you have questions regarding this request, please contact Frank Salwerowicz or his staff. Eric Finstick will be overall coordinator for the effort, and Richard Watson will be the coordinator for the GIS data and preparation of the maps.

Signed by
Ann Morgan

Authenticated by
Sharon Deuter

Attachments

BANGS CANYON ROADLESS REVIEW AREA

Acres reviewed: 21,472 Acres found to be roadless: 21,436

REASON AREA WAS REVIEWED- ISSUES

* Transportation planning and the Bangs Canyon Citizens Advisory Committee

RESULTS OF ANY PREVIOUS REVIEWS FOR WILDERNESS VALUES

* Area was found not to qualify as a WSA. The reason: the area was found to not have outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation.

* The decision was appealed to IBLA and was upheld

CURRENT MANAGEMENT UNDER EXISTING PLANNING DECISIONS

* Part of 140,000 acres Bangs Canyon Intensive Recreation Management Area

* Preserve Bangs Canyon from surface disturbing activities

* On 21,395 acres motorized travel limited to existing roads and trails; on 77 acres open to motorized travel year round.

* Available for oil and gas leasing (no current leases due to very low potential)

* Open for location of mining claims (no current claims due to low potential)

NATURAL VALUES

* Approx. 25 miles of remote, scenic canyon systems

* Wildlife habitat - Elk ,deer, bear & mountain lion

* 4 miles of high quality riparian habitat with native fish in NE Creek

CURRENT USES

- * Jeeping and mountain biking on nationally known Tabeguache Trail
- * Canoeing, floatboating along NE border on Gunnison river
- * Hiking; hunting
- * Livestock grazing on a portion of 7 grazing allotments.

VALID EXISTING RIGHTS

- * None

CASTLE PEAK ROADLESS REVIEW AREA

Acres reviewed: 3,996 Acres found to be roadless: 3,970

REASON AREA WAS REVIEWED- ISSUES

- * Road maintenance on three routes within the review area; would change portions of two of these routes from 'ways' to 'roads'.

RESULTS OF ANY PREVIOUS REVIEWS FOR WILDERNESS VALUES

- * The area was not identified as a Wilderness Study Area due to the existence of numerous trails, 'ways', fences, irrigation ditches and stock ponds which were considered to detract from the area's naturalness.

CURRENT MANAGEMENT UNDER EXISTING PLANNING DECISIONS

- * Oil and gas leasing status: All acreage open to leasing.
- * Livestock grazing permits on two allotments.
- * Potential harvest of forestry products in aspen-fir woodland.
- * 1,700 acres managed to provide semi-primitive non-motorized recreation. 2,270 acres managed to provide semi-primitive motorized.
- * OHV status: All acreage limited to designated routes totalling 2.3 miles.
- * Suitable for consideration of utilities and communications facilities.

NATURAL VALUES

- * Subalpine Pine-douglas fir forest and Sagebrush Steppe ecosystems, numerous aspen stands.
- * Elk calving habitat.
- * Stream and lake riparian and aquatic habitat.
- * Outstanding forested mountain scenery.

CURRENT USES

- * Hiking, hunting, camping, mountain biking, horseback riding, OHV.
- * Cattle and sheep summer grazing, three permittees on two allotments.
- * Big game hunting/outfitting and four wheel drive tour operations, four permittees.

VALID EXISTING RIGHTS

- * Water rights on springs (5), ditches (1) and reservoir (1).

PINYON RIDGE ROADLESS REVIEW AREA

Acres reviewed: 20,936 Acres found to be roadless: 19,965

REASON AREA WAS REVIEWED- ISSUES

- *Oil and gas leasing proposals
- *Transportation plan-OHV issues

RESULTS OF ANY PREVIOUS REVIEWS FOR WILDERNESS VALUES

- *Pinyon Ridge Area not identified as suitable as WSA, area was judged to not meet criteria of naturalness & outstanding opportunity for solitude or primitive & unconfined recreation.

CURRENT MANAGEMENT UNDER EXISTING PLANNING DECISIONS

- *Oil and gas leasing status: -8 valid existing leases comprise 8,000 acres

*OHV status: Oct 1 through April 30 limited to existing roads, ways and trails (approx. 45 miles) & limited all year in identified fragile soil areas and the black-footed ferret reintroduction areas.

*Livestock grazing.

NATURAL VALUES

*Suitable habitat for black-footed ferret reintroduction

*Typical Pinyon-Juniper forest

*Extensive views from west end of ridge

CURRENT USES

*Livestock grazing-4 permittees

*Oil, gas, & other mineral development-8 existing O&G leases

*Horse back riding, hiking, camping and hunting

*OHV, mountain biking

VALID EXISTING RIGHTS

*Acres under oil & gas lease-8,000-no leases held by production, all leases will expire by year 2006 if not developed

*Inholdings-approximately 960 acres of State owned school sections

*No known hard rock mineral values, or coal mining claims

*Easement granted by State of Colorado for public access.

SOUTH SHALE RIDGE ROADLESS REVIEW AREA

Acres reviewed: 33,400 Acres found to be roadless: 32,364

REASON AREA WAS REVIEWED- ISSUES

- * Oil and gas leasing proposals

RESULTS OF ANY PREVIOUS REVIEWS FOR WILDERNESS VALUES

- * Entire unit was part of original wilderness intensive inventory conducted.

- * Area was found not to qualify as a WSA; was found to not have outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation.

CURRENT MANAGEMENT UNDER EXISTING PLANNING DECISIONS

- * Entire area open for oil and gas leasing (high potential area).

- * Post RMP lease stipulations only apply to 7 of the 44 existing leases).

- * Entire area open to location and filing of mining claims (no current claims due to low potential)

- * For all new proposals, no surface occupancy on slopes greater than 40% (3,788 acres).

- * OHV designations - 24,361 acres OHV permitted only on routes signed as open- four open routes totalling approx. 3 miles. 8,997 acres open to motorized cross country travel off of existing routes.

NATURAL VALUES

- * Colorful, remote badlands; interesting geologic features

- * Unique, beautiful scenery

- * Presence of a threatened species of cactus in Coon Hollow.

CURRENT USES

- * OHV use along southern boundary road.

- * Hiking and exploring among unique rock formations.

- * Big game hunting

- * Oil and gas production on 27 wells.

* Livestock grazing on a portion of 7 grazing allotments.

VALID EXISTING RIGHTS

* Oil and gas leasing:

- 44 total leases within the area covering 24,674 acres (73.9% of the area)

- Unleased area comprises 8,726 acres (26.1% of the area)

YAMPA RIVER ROADLESS REVIEW AREA

Acres reviewed: 15,879 Acres found to be roadless: 9,661

REASON AREA WAS REVIEWED- ISSUES

*New construction proposed for Yampa Valley Trial segment.

RESULTS OF ANY PREVIOUS REVIEWS FOR WILDERNESS VALUES

*Little Yampa Canyon / Central third of Yampa River roadless review area:

Not recommended for wilderness intensive inventory because two roads bisected the area creating three parcels of less than 5,000 acres.

*Iles Mountain / Southern third of Yampa River roadless review area:

Not recommended for wilderness intensive inventory because unit was less than 5,000 acres or otherwise intensively developed.

CURRENT MANAGEMENT UNDER EXISTING PLANNING DECISIONS

*Oil and gas leasing status: existing leases - none; no surface occupancy 8,936 acres.

*Coal leasing status: suitable for underground mining 8,936 acres.

*OHV status. Use allowed only on designated routes for most of the area, which total 6 miles. In addition, 550 acres are open to motorized cross country travel.

*Management objectives:

-Little Yampa Canyon Special Recreation Management Area: manage for recreation opportunities, regionally significant flatwater floatboating on the Yampa River.

-Manage Yampa River to preserve free flowing river conditions which make portions of it eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River System (has not been designated or studied).

-Eastern part of review area-realize potential for development of coal and gas resources; 396 acres.

NATURAL VALUES

*17 miles of scenic river/canyon systems

*Endangered fish, animals or plants: squawfish, bald eagle.

*Critical habitat for deer, elk and sage grouse.

CURRENT USES

*Grazing

*Canoeing, floatboating, hiking, backpacking, hunting

*OHV, mountain biking

VALID EXISTING RIGHTS

*Inholdings: 2 private parcels of 160 acres each.

*ROW's: power line right-of-way (ROW) and a small portion of a ditch ROW.

VERMILLION BASIN ROADLESS REVIEW AREA

Acres reviewed: 92,809 Acres found to be roadless: 79,958

REASON AREA WAS REVIEWED- ISSUES

*Oil and gas leasing proposals

RESULTS OF ANY PREVIOUS REVIEWS FOR WILDERNESS VALUES

*Northwestern edge did not qualify because opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined

recreation were not outstanding.

*Southwestern portion did not qualify because imprints of man were considered substantially noticeable and opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation were limited due to open areas with little vegetation .

*The remainder was not recommended for intensive inventory because it was considered lacking in wilderness characteristics, or was less than 5,000 acres, or otherwise intensively developed.

CURRENT MANAGEMENT UNDER EXISTING PLANNING DECISIONS

*Oil and gas leasing 51,768 acres open.

*Coal exploration 79,958 acres open

*OHV 47,394 acres open to off road cross country travel; 25 miles open to travel on existing routes only; 13 miles open to travel only on designated routes.

*Management objectives:

-North Central area - development of oil and gas resources; 11,327 acres;

-Little Snake River - improve soil and watershed values, increase forage production, and enhance livestock grazing; 40,032 acres;

-Vermillion Creek area- prevent any increase in erosion and/or sediment yield, 16,178 acres.

-Cold Springs - maintain and improve the quality of habitat for elk, mule deer, bighorn sheep, and recreational opportunities (primarily hunting); 409 acres;

-Irish Canyon ACEC - protect remnant plant associations , geologic values, cultural resources and scenic quality; 6,743 acres;

-Lookout Mountain ACEC - protect remnant plant associations and scenic quality; 5,539 acres.

NATURAL VALUES

*Colorful remote badlands, outstanding geology, scenic views, archaeology.

*Endangered species: bald eagle.

CURRENT USES

*Grazing

*Hiking, hunting, OHV, mountain biking

*Mineral exploration

VALID EXISTING RIGHTS

*Acres under lease 5,695 (none held by production):

*Lands requested for leasing (11/96 Marathon): 7,137 acres.

*Inholdings: 197 acres private, State Land Board, 1280 acres.